THE HON'BLE MR JUSTICE V.V.S.RAO

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WRIT PETITION NO : 21003 of 2004

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Dated: 03.08.2005

Between:

Kancharla Hanumantha Rao, S/o. Mohan Rao,
R/o. Subbiah Thota, Chilakaluripet, Guntur District.

..... PETITIONER

AND

1 The Superintendent of Police, Guntur District, Guntur, and another.

.....RESPONDENTS

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ORDER:

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The petitioner seeks a writ of Mandamus declaring the action of the respondents in opening a rowdy sheet against the petitioner as being violative of Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

The petitioner is running an Electronics and Audio Cassette Centre. A case in Crime No.174 of 1990 was registered against the petitioner and three others, which was numbered as S.C.No.381 of 1992. The same was ended in acquittal. The case of the petitioner is that the respondents opened rowdy sheet without any valid reason, contrary to Order 742 of A.P.Police Standing Orders.

The second respondent filed a counter affidavit on behalf of the respondents denying the allegations made by the petitioner. It is stated that the petitioner was involved in some criminal cases. They further state that the petitioner is indulging in unlawful activities, which are not reported in the Police Station by the public due to fear from the petitioner. They also state that if the rowdy sheet is closed, it would be difficult to maintain law and order within the jurisdiction of Chilakaluripet Town Police Station.

The questions raised in this writ petition are squarely covered by the judgment of this Court in **S.Satyanarayana v. State of A.P.**. Therefore, the writ petition is

disposed of directing the respondents to consider the request of the petitioner for closing the rowdy sheet following the principles laid down in **Satyanarayana**'s case (supra), which are as under.

i. A mere conviction or convictions cannot be thumb rule for opening history sheet or rowdy sheet though history sheet can be opened even without conviction for the limited purpose of watching a person discreetly.

ii. At the time of opening a history sheet or rowdy sheet a competent officer has to apply mind taking into consideration the social background the proceedings in the criminal trial if a person is convicted and all other relevant material before passing orders for opening history sheet or rowdy sheet.

iii. A history sheet/rowdy sheet is retained for the period of two years only unless it is ordered to be closed by the Superintendent of Police earlier than two years. During the initial period of two years, the history sheeter or rowdy sheeter is entitled to request the concerned police officer to close the history sheet or rowdy sheet which has to be considered by the police officer in an objective manner.

iv. While passing orders for retention of history sheet for another year more, the competent Sub-Divisional Police Officer has to take into consideration the various factors, to wit, surveillance reports, the crime history with reference to the breach of peace of society during the preceding year, the social and political background of the person etc. If there is a preponderance of opinion among the surveillance officers that the person did not come up for any adverse notice and leading a blemishless family life it is a strong circumstance to order for closure of the history sheet or rowdy sheet.

v. When an order is passed by the competent police officer for retention of the history sheet by simply endorsing on the report/letter of the S.H.O. a single line order, that by itself cannot be a ground to continue the rowdy sheet.

vi. Any order passed by the Sub-Divisional Police Officer shall have to be supported by reasons. The reasons need not be communicated but to be recorded.

vii. The orders for opening or retention of history sheet/rowdy sheet are passed under the administrative instructions/guidelines. If such an order is challenged, the competent authority has to place the reasons before the Court which justify retention of history sheet/rowdy sheet. Further, it is always better for the Police Officer to record his own reasons for retention/opening of the history sheet/rowdy sheet.

viii. In the event as mentioned in conclusion 4.7 it is always open to the Court of judicial review to direct the Sub-Divisional Police Officer to reconsider his decision and pass appropriate orders. But whatever be the events in the guise of opening/retention of history sheet a person's liberty, right to privacy and other freedoms under Article 19 of the Constitution of India cannot be infringed under any circumstances.

ix. It is to be remembered that any order of the competent police officer which is not supported by reasons is itself unreasonable and arbitrary and can be termed as mala fide in the sense that it is contrary to the purpose for which the Police Officer is authorised under relevant Police Standing Orders. Hence, if the Court comes to the conclusion that the order of the Sub-Divisional Police Officer is contrary to the purpose for which surveillance is authorised, the action shall be set at naught forthwith on the principle that what is unreasonable and unfair is arbitrary and such arbitrary exercise of power amounts to exercising, the power mala fide.

The petitioner is, however, at liberty to approach the respondents by filing appropriate representation for closing rowdy sheet, if the same is still continued.

The writ petition is accordingly disposed of. No costs

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(V.V.S.RAO, J)

03.08.2005

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